

### **REMARKS**

Claims 1, 2, and 4-17 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 2, and 4-17 stand rejected. By this Amendment, claim 9 has been amended. The amendments made to the claims do not alter the scope of these claims, nor have these amendments been made to define over the prior art. Rather, the amendments to the claims have been made to improve the form thereof. In light of the amendments and remarks set forth below, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the pending claims is in immediate condition for allowance.

Claims 1, 2, and 4-17 are pending. Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, and 13-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,668,058 ("Tanioka") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,305,944 ("Yoshida"). We respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection.

Among the limitations of independent claim 1 not present in the cited combination is a second gas channel disposed at an edge of a plate and a second gas outlet opening for the second gas channel which points towards the edge of the plate adapted to expel a gas parallel to the clamping device. This limitation is not disclosed by Tanioka. As recited in the claims and shown in the present application, the second gas outlet 15 shown in Figure 1 has a gas outlet opening which points towards the edge of the plate and adapted to expel a gas parallel to the clamping device.

In contrast, as shown in Figure 10c of Tanioka, the N<sub>2</sub> gas 10 is expelled from piping 9 towards the center of the clamping device, not towards the edge explicitly recited in the claims. Thus, claims 1, 2, 4, 5, and 13-16 are not rendered obvious by the cited combination and must be allowed.

With respect to claim 13, Tanioka fails to disclose the explicitly recited flushing device including a plate with window, a first gas channel, and a first gas outlet

opening arranged at the window, the flushing device being aligned parallel to the transporting area of the clamp.

Claims 6-8 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanioka in view of Yoshida and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,288,376 ("Tsumura"). As discussed above, the combination of Tanioka and Yoshida fail to anticipate independent claims 1 and 13. The inclusion of Tsumura fails to cure the deficiency noted in claims 1 and 13 above. Therefore, claims 6-8 and 17 are also allowable over the cited combination.

Claims 9-12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanioka in view of Yoshida and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,334,567 ("Xie").

Among the limitations of claim 9 present in the cited reference is flushing the contents of the chip and the components with a forming gas, the forming gas being directed both perpendicular and parallel to the chip.

In Tanioka, the forming gas is presented generally from the side of the stage. However, this is unlike the explicitly recited claim limitation wherein the forming gas has to be presented both parallel and perpendicular to the chip. Therefore, claims 9-12 are not rendered obvious by the cited combination.

Applicants have responded to all of the rejections and objections recited in the Office Action. Reconsideration and a Notice of Allowance for all of the pending claims are therefore respectfully requested.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue.

If the Examiner believes an interview would be of assistance, the Examiner is welcome to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

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Respectfully submitted,

/Ian R. Blum/

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